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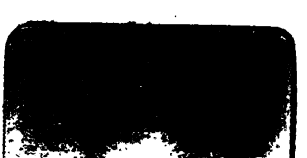

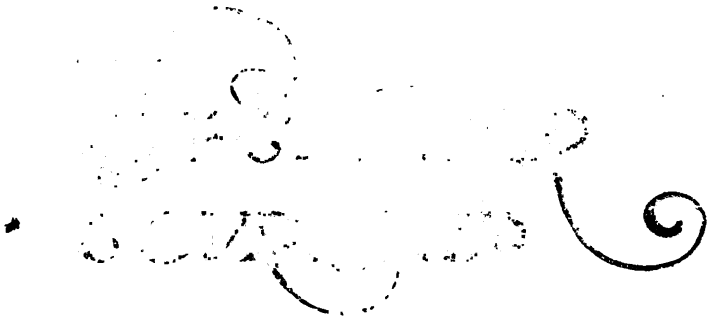

MARIAN STANDISH

SIX-CYLINDER COURTSHIP

EDWARD S. [illegible]

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HARRISON [illegible]

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CLARENCE [illegible]

NEW YORK

GROSSET & DUNLAP

PUBLISHERS

MARIAN STANDISH

CYLINDER
ET SHIP

By

D SALISBURY FIELD

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ARRISON [illegible]

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A SIX-CYLINDER COURTSHIP

By

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Frontispiece by

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At a safe distance, I set her down; then turned abruptly. 126

A Six-Cylinder Courtship

I

THE romance of my life began when a puff of wind landed a speck of dust in Jimmie Redmond's left eye. It was an obstinate speck of dust; Jimmie winked and rubbed and went through all the approved motions, but he couldn't dislodge it. So I tooted down Lexington Avenue (we had just made the run from Ardsley) to the corner of Thirty-fourth Street, where Jimmie hopped out and entered a drug store. I don't know whether druggists take a special course in it, but they always seem to be able to remove a speck of dust from a fellow's eye.

The first thing I did, then, was to put on

my goggles. I'm awfully thankful I did, too; for that instant Fate turned the corner and tried to throw dust in my eyes. Instead, I threw dust into the eyes of Fate.

I don't remember whether Fate was rated a goddess in the classic literature of yesterday or not. If not, times have changed, for my Fate *was* a goddess. Bewitchingly slender and *petite*, with a vivid, alluring face and the nicest eyes in the whole world, she stopped beside the car. And when she asked me a question, I threw in my mental clutch so awkwardly that I seemed, for a moment, to have stripped my transmission-gear of speech. There I sat, like an idiot, my hands on the steering wheel.

Then she repeated her question, and I was conscious of being towed into Heaven by an angel at the rate of six thousand miles per minute. This mad burst of speed, however, did not prevent me from answering her question. "Yes, miss," I said, "this car is for hire."

"It looks like a good car," she observed, "and I'm in a great hurry."

With that I leaped to the sidewalk and opened the tonneau door.

"Where to?" I asked, touching my cap.

"Where to?" I asked, touching my cap.

She gave me a number on Fifth Avenue.

Scared pink for fear Jimmie Redmond would appear, I lost no time in starting. What a blessing that I hadn't killed my engine! I rounded the corner on to Thirty-fourth Street (I had stopped my car on Lexington Avenue) with the caution of a timid mariner rounding the Horn; Jimmie Redmond was the rock on which I feared to wreck, and I prayed, as only a heathen can, that I might make the turn with no mishap. Past the lamp-post on the corner, past the Thirty-fourth-Street entrance to the drug store. "The gods are kind," I thought, and threw in the high speed.

"Hey, Billy!"

I glanced over my shoulder, and there was Jimmie, racing after me.

As if that wasn't enough, the girl called my attention to him. "Somebody seems to want you," she said.

"Yes, miss," I acknowledged, opening the throttle wider.

"Aren't you going to stop?"

"No, miss."

"But it may be important."

"It isn't, miss."

"I must insist on your stopping," she said. "At once," she added, as she saw I made no motion to obey. And that with Jimmie a whole block in the rear!

I suppose I might have lied to her—might have invented some excuse—but I didn't. In the first place, I could think of no proper excuse; in the second place, her command to stop was so imperious that I dared not disobey, for fear of spoiling everything. You may scorn me as one entirely lacking in plausible invention if you will, but who, pray, can plan rapidly when his mind is filled with vexatious thoughts? I was far too busy cursing Jimmie to execute a brilliant *coup*, much less plan one.

I had, however, one flash of inspiration—a primitive flash, perhaps, but, like all primitive things, begot of common-sense. There is an axiom in the world's manual of tactics, gospel alike to soldier, sailor, chauffeur and second-story man; it reads: "If you can't run, face the enemy."

Of course, when my fair passenger had insisted that I stop, I had stopped; whereat Jimmie Redmond, who by this time had probably quite given up hope of catching me, took heart and jog-trotted toward us. Then it was

I executed this most excellent manœuvre, in accordance with the axiom before mentioned, and turned sharply round.

"Perhaps I had better find out what he wants, miss," I remarked in my best anything-to-oblige-a-lady manner, as we crawled slowly toward the enemy.

"Thank you," she said.

Jimmie Redmond is supposed by his friends —some of his friends—to be a man of unusually quick perceptions. But of all the stupid, blundering asses——!

As he came toward us he was nothing more nor less than a human interrogation mark—questioning eyebrows, questioning eyes, and why-in-thunder-did-you-leave-me? written all over his face. That the girl didn't read the whole story at a glance was nothing short of a miracle. Perhaps Fate threw some dust in her eyes just then. Or perhaps—— But I'll leave that for you to decide.

There is another axiom in the world's manual of tactics which reads: "When face to face with the enemy, intimidate him if possible." This I most earnestly sought to do. When within twenty feet of Jimmie I leaned over the wheel, and, sheltered from the ador-

able eyes of my most adorable passenger, scowled threateningly, shaking my fist the while. If I hadn't needed one hand to steer with I'd have shaken both fists.

While I cannot say much for Jimmie's perceptions—that is, much that is complimentary—my attitude, so alarmingly belligerent, undoubtedly impressed him. He stopped short and gazed at me like one in a dream—an unpleasant dream.

Though puzzled, he was, alas! as miserably interrogative as ever; his eyes and eyebrows were quite as questioning. The one mitigating feature in his conduct was that he let me speak first. Even there, perhaps, I am too generous; I might better say that I spoke first.

"Did you wish anything, sir?" I asked as I brought the car to a halt at the curb.

"Well, really, old chap ——" he began.

"Did you wish anything, sir?" I repeated, with a menacing look in my eyes.

"Er—I don't know," he stammered feebly.

"He doesn't know," I said, turning respectfully to my passenger.

"Of course I know!" Jimmie declared indignantly.

"Of course you know, sir," I agreed. "But if it isn't important, I'd like to go on, sir, as this lady has hired the car. No offense to you, sir."

"Oh, if it's like that!" said Jimmie.

"Very well, sir. Good-day, sir."

We left Jimmie standing on the curb, the picture of astonishment.

II

ONCE more we started on our way toward Fifth Avenue. The beautiful girl in the tonneau may have been a bit suspicious of me; I do not know. Certainly, Jimmie had done his best to spoil everything. But had he succeeded? And what was everything? I might wait at the corner of Lexington Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street till my tires rotted, and yet never lay eyes on my passenger again. I could scarcely hope for a repetition of this charming adventure.

But, surely, there must be a way. Supposing I were to cut rates? No matter how rich people are—she didn't look a bit poor—they enjoy getting things at half price. I would make her a price of two dollars and a half an hour. That might arouse her sus-

picions, but what woman ever allowed her suspicions to stand in the way of her getting a bargain? "Two and a half, marked down from five! If that doesn't fetch her, nothing will," I thought. Then I stopped the car, for we were in front of the shop she was seeking, a millinery shop. That settled it; she *was* rich.

As I descended from the car to help her alight, I caught a glimpse of myself, mirrored in the window. While indistinctly reflected, the glimpse was most reassuring; a more disreputable-looking person would have been hard to find. Indeed, I was almost too untidy to look professional; what with dust (Jimmie and I had repaired a puncture on the road) and grease (I seem to have a genius for rubbing against grease) I was a sight to behold. My goggles added the last touch. There was no doubt of it: I was the real thing.

"I sha'n't need you any longer," she said, as she stepped to the sidewalk. "How much is it, please?"

"A dollar, miss. My rates is two dollars and a half an hour."

"Isn't that unusually cheap?"

"It's half rate, miss."

"Do you charge every one that?"

"Oh, yes, miss! And I makes more money than any of them, for I never has to hunt far for customers. Would you be wanting me again?"

"Why, I don't know," she replied thoughtfully.

"If you ever want me, here's my number," I said, taking a pencil from my pocket and writing hurriedly on a piece of crumpled paper. "Just ring up 1582 Madison, Number 7, and ask for the Reliance Garage, and Bill Snow. Thank you, miss. Good-afternoon, miss."

And so I left her.

With the first dollar I had ever earned in my pocket, and with love in my heart, I tooted up the Avenue, round the corner at Fifty-sixth Street and into my garage—the Reliance Garage.

"Sha'n't I take you home, Mr. Snowden?" asked little Jerry Spinner, my guide, philosopher and friend in the gasoline world.

"No, thanks, Jerry," I replied. "I'll walk."

My apartment was only a square away, and, after tubbing and a complete change, I'm sure my beautiful patron of the afternoon

wouldn't have believed me if I had revealed my identity.

But two things remained to be done, and the day was complete. "Collins," I said to my man, "if anybody rings up and asks for Bill Snow, that's me."

"Very well, sir."

"And no matter what time of day or night they ring, you must call me."

"Yes, sir."

"And, if they ask if this is the Reliance Garage, you're to say it is."

"Very well, sir."

"And, Collins ——"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't let me start out without telling you where I'm going, so you can reach me in case any one telephones."

Later, as I was leaving for the club to look up Jimmie Redmond, I was greatly amazed and equally angry to be interrogated by Collins:

"Where is it this evening, Mr. Snowden?"

"Where is what?" I asked sharply.

"I mean where are you going, sir?"

"By all the powers!" I exlaimed, "this is ——" Then, suddenly remembering, I told

him were I was going, for the sake of Bill Snow.

That's all, I think, except that Jimmie was devilish coy, disposed to unpleasant comments. The litte beast!

And, yes—I might as well confess it, I suppose—I kissed the dollar she had given me before going to bed that night.

III

TO be the biggest frog in your own particular puddle has long been considered an enviable distinction. And there are no end of puddles: the Wall Street puddle, the College Settlement puddle, the Society puddle with its miniature eddies and whirlpools, the Cherry Hill puddle, the Mulberry Bend puddle—— In short, New York, from the Battery to the Bronx, is a series of puddles. And in the centre of every puddle is a prize frog—big, complacent, all-powerful, an uncrowned king.

It is not without a certain pride, then, that I announce my own pretentions; for behold, I was, at this time, a prize frog myself, quite in the centre of a puddle of my own. Not the puddle of my club, where, truth to tell, I have always been rated rather a small frog, but in

the more exclusive gasoline puddle of my garage, where, as the patron with the most expensive car, the largest monthly repair bill and the reputation for liberality in the matter of tips and other gasoline gratuities, I was considered a very big frog, indeed.

The proprietor of the Garage—the Reliance Garage—recognized my superiority in countless ways, much to the disgust of owners of less expensive cars. Jones might rave about his brakes for a week, and Smith might rage at the condition of his carbureter till he grew black in the face, but William Snowden, Esq. (that's me), had only to suggest, and his suggestions were repeated as commands; Jim would stop work on Jones' brakes, and Pat would drop Smith's carbureter and attend to Mr. Snowden's. Which was awfully nice for Mr. Snowden, but rather hard on Smith and Jones.

I had, however, one real friend, the smallest frog in the puddle, who did not eye my change-pocket wistfully, who did not carry his penchant for perquisites into the field of grand larceny—Jerry Spinner, a cheerful, little Irishman, with fiery-red hair and a heart of gold. He was my crutch in the hour of short

circuits, my beacon of hope on the dark sea of chewed-up bearings, my oasis in the desert of stripped gears. To him I looked for guidance as a child looks to its father; to him I turned for light as a flower turns to the sun. And Jerry never failed me.

If I were to paint a picture symbolic of Truth, Honesty and Patience I would not paint an anæmic damsel with a torch in her hand and a laurel on her brow; I would paint Jerry in his dirty, blue overalls, his grimy hands, his grease-smudged face. Good old Jerry!

It is not to be wondered at, then, that I should turn to Jerry at this time, particularly as my happiness was so plainly dependent upon gasoline. At an early hour next morning—eight o'clock it was, and that's fearfully early—I had Collins ring up the Reliance Garage and request the proprietor to send Jerry to my apartment at once. On his arrival I guardedlv bared my heart to him.

"You see, Jerry, it's like this ——"

"Yes, sorr."

"I want my car to stand up and run as she's never run before."

"Yes, sorr."

"And I can't bother about any repairs."

Jerry looked doubtful.

"I want you to have her full of gasoline, and cylinder oil, and everything she needs, so that I can have her at a minute's notice. She must be as clean as a whistle, and her brass work must outshine the sun."

"Yes, sorr."

"I may not want her for two or three days, but I may want her within the hour. And when I do take her out, the instant I bring her in again she must be refilled and cleaned. By the way, here's five dollars; it doesn't belong to me, so it must be yours."

Jerry smiled beatifically.

"And Jerry?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Don't let anybody touch her unless you're standing by."

"Hadn't ye better write a line to the boss, sorr? There be a new boy on the floor, and I misthrust the looks uv him. And there's me day off to be consithered."

There was wisdom in Jerry's suggestion, and I adopted it. Having dispatched the note and Jerry, I proceeded to kill time; at least I tried to kill it, but only succeeded in disabling it so

that it crawled haltingly. I read the newspaper through without skipping a single advertisement—hotels, theatres, rooms to let, boys wanted, swaps, second-hand clothing bought. Truly, a dreary business. I played three games of Patience.

Quarter to ten! Would the telephone bell never ring?

Then I thought of possible complications. I might get caught in some engagement or other if I answered any telephone calls. To avoid this danger, I instructed Collins to tell everybody who called or rang up, with the exception of the person asking for Bill Snow, that I was out of town.

Ten o'clock, and the telephone bell rang. I bounded hopefully out of my chair, only to hear Collins say: "No, Mr. Redmond, Mr. Snowden is out of town."

Then nothing happened for an hour.

Eleven o'clock found me desperate. Twelve o'clock found me more desperate. Why, oh why didn't my fair passenger of yesterday ring up Bill Snow?

At one o'clock I was hungry, yet dared not go to the club for fear of meeting Jimmie Redmond, who had been told that I

was out of town, so I had luncheon in my apartment.

At two o'clock Wallie Stuart rang up, and another member of my club was informed that I was out of town. Well, I could get back to town in time to have dinner at the club, at any rate.

At three o'clock I sent Collins down to buy half a dozen books, which shows how up against it I really was, for I never read books. Collins returned with two automobile and four detective stories. The man who wrote the first one had never seen an automobile. The man who wrote the second one had only seen a catalogue. The dectective stories were not so bad. I chose the red one because my car is red, and it was a corker; I forgot all about Bill Snow and was tracking bandits through the Sierra Nevada Mountains on snow-shoes—— Then the telephone bell rang.

I waited with my heart in my mouth, only to hear Collins answer: "No, Mr. Redmond, Mr. Snowden hasn't returned yet."

After being interrupted, I couldn't get interested in my bandits and snow-shoes again, so, tossing the book aside, I fell to considering my case and feeling sorry for myself. Here I

was, Love's prisoner, a captive in my own apartment, a slave to my own telephone, by George! I stalked up and down, moody and depressed, till I happened to glance toward the window.

Thank Heaven! It had clouded up; it looked like a thunderstorm. Nobody would want to go riding in a thunderstorm. Bill Snow was free till to-morrow.

That's all. Only coming home from the club that night I nearly gave the cabby the dollar I had kissed the night before.

IV

I SLEPT till nine the next morning, and on waking made a dash for the window to see what sort of day the gods had sent me. It was a ripping day, just the kind of day for a beautiful lady to go shopping in an automobile, so I jumped into my bath, whistling, and sipped my coffee and broke my egg with enthusiasm. I even read the paper with interest, and, on the whole, was as egregious an optimist as one could find in a day's journey. Had my old nurse been by she would have remarked that "Mr. William had got up on the right side of his bed."

"I'm out of town again to-day, Collins," I announced.

"And Mr. Snow?" asked the polite Collins.

"Bill Snow's on deck, same as yesterday.

And pray remember that this particular apartment is the Reliance Garage."

"Very well, sir."

And so I sat on one comfortable chair, my feet on another comfortable chair; and my thoughts wove delectable dreams: A knight in splendid armor (that was me), with a magnificent dollar in his pocket (did knights have pockets in their armor?), was walking down a pleached alley, leading by the hand a glorious divinity in pale-blue brocade. Somewhere in a thicket a nightingale was singing, and the air was redolent with the perfume of roses—and of gasoline——

Then the telephone bell rang, and I shot out of my chair just in time to collide with Collins, who had bounded in from the next room.

"Don't apologize!" I entreated. "Answer the 'phone!"

Spurred on by my expression of impatience, Collins took down the receiver. My head whirled dizzily with happiness, for Collins was saying: "Yes, madam, this is the Reliance Garage."

"When she asks for Bill Snow, I'll talk to her," I whispered.

Collins' face now assumed a puzzled expression.

"Anything wrong?" I asked feverishly.

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"What is it? Quick!"

"Why, you see, sir, the boy at the exchange desk downstairs must have been listening, and he had to chip in."

"Go on," I commanded.

"And when I told the lady that this was the Reliance Garage, he said, 'Aw, it ain't either, it's the Luxor Apartments.' And then——"

"Yes, and then?" I demanded fiercely.

"And then, sir, he cut me off."

I know now how Napoleon felt when he was defeated at Waterloo, how Julius Cæsar felt when he was stabbed by Brutus. For me that moment was the epitome of all the tragedies of all the centuries. There wasn't a wretched Buttons in the whole apartment house that hadn't been tipped by me to the point of affluence. And now I was betrayed, just at the moment of my greatest triumph. Betrayed! Stripped of my dreams! Robbed of my romance!

But by all that was holy and unholy—it should not be! I would conquer Circum-

stance. I would snap my fingers in the face of Fate.

"Collins," I said in a strained, unnatural voice, "go downstairs and strangle that young devil at the telephone desk until he looks dead. Then hold a five-dollar bill before his eyes until he revives. Then tell him that Apartment Number 7, 1582 Madison, is the Reliance Garage. Also, instruct him to impress this bit of exclusive information on the night boy, and the boy who relieves him during the noon hour. Now go!"

V

DID you ever stop to think what a fiendish invention the telephone is? Some days it drives you nearly mad with its constant ringing; again it drives you quite mad by its silence. You wish that Mrs. Johnson wouldn't ring you up, and she does. You wish that Miss Johnson would ring you up, and she doesn't. You go out for an hour, and on your return are informed that Mr. Bellaire has telephoned.

"Did he leave any message?"

"No, sir."

Then you fall to wondering what on earth Mr. Bellaire wanted.

Nothing that Mr. Bellaire has said or done in the ten years that you have known him has ever interested you, yet now your curiosity is

Then you lie politely, while inwardly you curse Bellaire.

aroused. What in thunder could he have wanted anyway?

Finally, you can stand it no longer. You call up Bellaire at his club, at his office, at his house—only to learn that he wishes you to attend one of his informal, dreary, little dinners, to meet a long-haired Russian, who has written a novel you've never read.

Then you lie politely, while inwardly you curse Bellaire, curse yourself for being such an ass as to ring him up, and resolve never, never, never to do it again. But to-morrow finds you equally curious, and correspondingly asinine.

It is easy enough to evolve a telephone philosophy now. But as I paced the room in my apartment that morning, hoping against hope that the Lady of My Heart would make another try for the Reliance Garage—1582 Madison, Number 7—I was far from being a philosopher. Instead, I burned with a mad rage toward all little boys in brass buttons, and was possessed with a primitive desire to wreck every telephone office in town. Indeed, I longed to go for the telephone companies with an axe.

My one consolation arose from the fact that

Collins was supposed to be strangling the boy at the desk downstairs. Even there, however, I had my doubts; Collins was so uniformly gentle and good-natured. There's a lot in that old saying: "If you want a thing well done, do it yourself."

Then the telephone bell rang, and on taking down the receiver I heard the sweetest voice in the world asking: "Is Bill Snow there?"

"This is Bill Snow."

"Is your automobile engaged for this afternoon?"

"No, miss."

"Will you come to No.—, Central Park West, at two? Two sharp, please?"

"Yes, miss. Who shall I ask for?"

"For Miss Standish."

"Very good, miss. I'll be there. Good-by."

Would I be there? Would Bill Snow be at No.—, Central Park West, at two P. M.? Just wouldn't he, though?

And her name was Standish! Mrs. William Snowden—*née* Standish! Once more my castle in the air was complete. Mrs. William Snowden—*née* Standish! But it was quite necessary that Bill Snow should come back to earth and get busy.

The first thing I did, then, was to ring up the garage and tell Jerry Spinner that the car must be ready for me at half-past one.

When Collins showed up a moment later, I was a regular human sunbeam, radiating warmth, happiness and contentment into every corner of the room.

"I hope you didn't hurt the poor, dear lad," I said.

"Well," said Collins, and his eyes twinkled, "I estimate that the finger-marks on his throat will wear off in a few days, sir."

"A five-dollar bill makes an admirable poultice—eh, Collins?"

"It do, indeed, sir."

I spent the rest of the morning deciding what clothes I should wear. When a man's in love he naturally wants to look his best when appearing before his divinity, and that was the one thing in the world I dared not attempt. I finally settled on an old brown suit. Then I asked Collins for a needle and thread.

"Is it something I can do for you, sir?"

"No, thank you. Just a threaded needle, please. And I want the thread to be strong, you understand."

"Silk, sir?"

"No, just thread."

I made a clumsy job of it, perhaps; but when I had finished, the magic dollar, the dollar She had given me, the round dollar of Destiny, was sewed snugly into my waistcoat pocket.

"No risk of spending you now, old chap," I murmured, as I patted the pocket affectionately.

VI

AT the garage I found Jerry Spinner giving an extra rub to my gas lamps. I'm sure it was affection that prompted him to do it, for no car ever shone more resplendently; the brass work would have done credit to a man-of-war, while the beautiful red body was like satin—faultless, shimmering satin.

I tell you, it makes a fellow's blood tingle to look at a car like mine, and feel that it belongs to him; a car that will start on the direct drive, a car that will race a railroad train or jog contentedly behind a milk cart, a car that can make a steep hill ashamed of itself; a wild, dashing car that eats up the miles; a faithful, sweet-running car that purrs like a pussy-cat! To own such a car is to own a kingdom; the driver's seat is a throne, the steering-

wheel a sceptre, miles are your minions and distance your slave.

To be sure, there are sixty horses to manage, and sometimes they buck, sometimes they balk. But that isn't often. And when you have them well in hand there is nothing you need fear save brass buttons and a helmet, a nail, or a bit of broken glass on the road.

If ever a car ran sweetly, mine did that afternoon. I rang the bell at No.—, Central Park West, with the timidity of a butcher's boy who, having found the area gate fastened, has ventured to deliver the mutton chops by way of the front door.

A gloomy-looking man in livery answered the bell.

"The automobile for Miss Standish," I announced briefly.

He regarded me coldly, and, after a disapproving glance at the car, shut the door in my face.

Ten minutes passed—ten miserable, doubting minutes! Then the front door opened, and a dear, little, old lady in lavender silk came slowly down the steps, attended by the gloomy man in livery.

My heart sank. Wasn't *She* coming? Was

I to take Auntie and the pet poodle for an airing?

As if in answer to my thoughts, a maid now appeared leading a black poodle of the Russian variety, fearfully and wonderfully shaved, with a woolly head, a bare back, muffs on its legs just above the ankle, and a tassel on its tail.

By this time I was ready to scream with rage and disappointment. I almost forgot to touch my cap; I quite forgot to open the tonneau door, and the manner in which that blackguardly Beau Brummel from below-stairs did it for me was at once a lesson in deportment and a reprimand.

The little lady in lavender was now safe in the tonneau, the black poodle beside her. After bowing respectfully, Beau Brummel and the maid had withdrawn to the house, closing the front door.

Once more Fate had slapped me in the face. No wonder my cheeks burned! Two lines of derisive doggerel I had heard somewhere ran mockingly through my head:

Smarty, Smarty gave a party,
And nobody came.

I've strained at gnats and swallowed heaps of camels in my day, but I've never swallowed harder than I did over that poodle.

Smarty, Smarty gave a party,
And a black poodle came.

The little lady in lavender was probably her aunt.

I pulled myself together with an effort. "Where to, madam?" I asked.

"Nowhere, yet," she answered. "We are waiting for my niece."

I have never quite understood how I managed to keep from flinging myself into the tonneau and embracing her, then and there. And the black poodle's presence in the tonneau meant that *She* was to sit on the front seat beside me.

Then the front door opened, and a delicious figure in a blue broadcloth skirt and an enchanting Russian pony-skin jacket floated down the steps. From her smart toque to her trim little boots she was perfect. What a dear morsel of womankind she was—hardly five feet two! How soft and black her hair! How unexpected, those blue eyes! Blue eyes

and black lashes. I felt like a gawky young giant as I helped her into the car.

My orders were delightfully indefinite: "Out Riverside Drive, perhaps, and twice through the Park. It was such a beautiful afternoon. And don't go fast, please; Auntie is a trifle nervous about automobiles."

The drive was a dream. That afternoon I learned many things: *Her* name was Marian. Marian Standish—what a delightful name! Marian Snowden—how infinitely more delightful! Auntie was Aunt Elizabeth, and the black poodle answered to the name of Toutou. I drove so carefully that Aunt Elizabeth wasn't a bit nervous. Safe, sane and conservative, that was Bill Snow in a nutshell.

We made the round of the Park twice. I saw at least fifty people whom I knew. But there is little or no harm in a passing bow, especially when the recipient fails to acknowledge it.

I thought my time had come, however, when, caught in a crush of traffic, I found myself alongside Mrs. Larkin-Pryor's victoria. Not that I was afraid of Mrs. Larkin-Pryor. But who should be sitting beside her but Jimmie Redmond!

"Hullo, Billy!" he bawled, raising his hat. "How do you do, sir?"

Mrs. Larkin-Pryor turned and stared, then waved a fat hand. "When are you coming to see me?" she called.

"To-morrow, ma'am," I replied hastily.

Thank Heaven! The carriage ahead of me was now moving. How I hated Jimmie, and how I loathed Mrs. Larkin-Pryor! What would the girl beside me think?

"You seem to be very popular, Bill."

How delicious it sounded to hear her call me Bill! And how I lied! Ye gods, how I did lie!

"Well, you see, miss," I explained, "I used to work for that gentleman who spoke to me, before I went into business for myself. And the lady with him has just bought a new automobile, and wants me to teach her how to run it."

"I see," said Miss Marian Standish.

That was all she said, but what was it she saw? Did she see deceit? Was my name Bill Snow—or was it Mud?

VII

THE poet who wrote:

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all,

wasn't such a dry, old bird as his other poems might lead one to believe.

Not that I admitted for a moment that I had lost—I wouldn't lose; I was resolved to marry Miss Marian Standish, whether my name was Mud or not. If I couldn't win her as Bill Snow, I'd woo and win her as William Snowden. And even in New York, where money is such a screaming necessity, William Snowden, Esq., wasn't considered a bad match. The social barometer always registered fair weather when he turned up; mothers with marriageable daughters beamed at him approvingly and invited him to dinners and to the opera, to their boxes at the Horse Show.

to pink teas, to all manner of inane and unattractive entertainments.

Oh, yes, William Snowden was a popular young man! But that didn't help matters a bit. The one important thing was: What did *She* think? If she thought at all, it was probably that Bill Snow was a careful driver, that his car was an unusually good model, and that his rate of two dollars and a half an hour was ridiculously cheap.

To be a chauffeur in a million is an undoubted distinction; to be a chauffeur with a million borders on burlesque. Yet I wasn't conscious of my absurd position at the time. As I tooted into my garage, after returning from the threshold of Heaven, No.—, Central Park West, I felt at once hopefully despondent and despondently hopeful. It would all end right. It had to end right, that's all there was about it.

"Did ye have a good run, sorr?" asked Jerry Spinner.

"Splendid, Jerry! Splendid!"

"Be ye going out this evening, sorr?"

"I think not."

"To-morrow's me day off, Mr. Snowden. I thought I'd better be reminding ye uv it."

"All right, Jerry," I replied carelessly,

"just fix her up as usual. You might try a voltmeter on that wet cell, and be sure and have a good time to-morrow."

"Now, about that new boy I was telling ye about—him that got a job here last week. I misthrust him, Mr. Snowden."

"Nonsense, Jerry; you'd mistrust your own grandmother!"

I dined that night at the club, hoping to kill two birds with one stone, the two birds I had in mind being a good dinner and Jimmie Redmond. Although the good dinner was forthcoming, Jimmie Redmond was missing, dining out somewhere, no doubt. Among the letters in my box I found an invitation for the week-end, a nice, jolly invitation written by that treasure among women, Mrs. Tom Studleigh. At the bottom of the last page was a postscript by dear old Tom himself. Tom and I had been friends since our college days—good old Tom!—and Mrs. Tom was a brick. If I got beyond my depth in this Bill Snow affair, I'd count on her to pull me out. She was just the person who would know exactly what to do; nowhere was there a more skilled pilot of the social seas, or one more willing to throw a life-line to a sinking friend.

I decided to accept the invitation provisionally. I could do that with Mrs. Tom. "I'll come if I can," I wrote, "but don't count on me."

I hung about the club till half-past nine, hoping that Jimmie would turn up, for it was high time he and I were having a heart-to-heart talk. I had resolved to throw myself on his bosom and appeal to his sense of chivalry. That meant, of course, that I should have to take him into my confidence. I didn't relish doing that a little bit, but the little beggar seemed to have a genius for appearing on the scene at precisely the wrong time, and if I didn't muzzle him at once there was no counting the damage he might do. I waited another half-hour. Still no Jimmie!

At ten minutes past ten Wallie Stuart strolled into the green-room and suggested we run over to the Casino for the last act of Flirty Gerty, with supper at Sherry's afterward. I accepted with alacrity, not that I cared for Flirty Gerty or supper at Sherry's, but anything was better than just hanging about and waiting.

Flirty Gerty bored me almost to extinction, and at Sherry's——We handed over our hats

and coats, and made for the table Wallie had thoughtfully engaged. Before I had taken ten steps, however, my eyes fell on a party of four, seated at a table on my right. I gazed at them in utter amazement, then turned and fled. For the four people were Aunt Elizabeth (Marian's aunt, you know), a handsome-looking chap whom I had never seen before, Marian herself, and, sitting next to her and chattering away like a little ape, was Jimmie Redmond.

That settled it; my name *was* Mud. In one brief and startled glance I had witnessed the demise of Bill Snow.

As for Wallie Stuart, he never did learn what became of me that night.

VIII

I SPENT next day in my apartment. Of course she wouldn't ring up. Jimmie Redmond had settled Bill Snow's fate the night before. Yet I couldn't help hoping, for at heart I knew Jimmie wasn't a spoil-sport; I was sure that he would never, wittingly, pour water into my gasoline. Hadn't I got him into the Amsterdam Club, the hardest club to make in New York? Wasn't I the best friend he had in the world? Besides, it might be that he and Marian were not conscious of ever having seen each other before last night. One always looks so different in the evening.

Logically, then, I had every reason to be optimistic. Actually, however, I became more and more despondent.

Then the telephone bell rang, and I heard myself telling Collins, in a mournful voice,

that I was out of town, as usual, which interesting information was repeated into the ear of Mrs. Larkin-Pryor's maid.

An hour later it occurred to me that I was an egregious imbecile not to hunt up Jimmie Redmond and learn my fate direct. After all, there was nothing in the world so trying as uncertainty. I rang for Collins.

"Get Mr. Redmond on the wire, please."

Collins tried six numbers before he met with any success, and even then his success consisted in the very unsatisfactory announcement that "Mr. Redmond had left early that morning for Westchester County."

Was there ever anything more exasperating? Here I was a languishing prisoner, while Jimmie was foozling and driving into bunkers out-of-doors! Or, perhaps he was lifting one of Wallie Stuart's sprung-kneed hunters over a three-foot fence, in mad cry after an evil-smelling anise-bag.

At half-past six I went for a walk, intending to return in half an hour, dress, and go to the club for dinner. It was delightful out-of-doors; just the night for a run, with dinner on a balcony overlooking the Hudson. As I

strolled up the avenue, I half resolved to telephone from one of the big hotels near Fifty-ninth Street, and have my car meet me there, trusting to luck to pick up a dinner-companion at the club.

At Fifty-ninth Street I wavered uncertainly. Should I telephone, or shouldn't I? An automobile glided past me, making toward the Park. It was a stunning big automobile, red like mine—the same make as mine. By George, it was mine! "33756 N. Y.!" That was my number swinging at the rear. What did it mean?

Surprise and uncertainty melted into rage. I'd teach them to let my car out without my knowledge! I'd fix that rascally chauffeur! I'd show them they couldn't trifle with William Snowden, Esq. I'd see to it that every owner of every car in the garage should hear of this outrage; I'd ruin their business, by George! I'd sue them; I'd make New York too hot to hold them; I'd——

Hugging the curb, not two feet away, was a car with a "To Hire" sign on it. The very thing!

The chauffeur in my car was plainly bent on turning a dishonest penny. He was going

somewhere to pick up a load. But where would he take them?

I jumped into the automobile so fortuitously at hand. "A turn in the Park, then Riverside Drive," I ordered sharply. In a moment we were off.

We dived into the Park—not a sign of my car anywhere. Down West Seventy-second Street, round a corner into the Drive—still no sign. I might miss them altogether now; I probably would. They might be tooting out St. Nicholas Avenue for all I knew. Maybe that miserable chauffeur was taking his sweetheart for a spin. If he was, I could almost forgive him. Lucky fellow, to have a sweetheart to spin with!

We turned from the Drive to circle past a restaurant, and to inspect the half-dozen cars that are usually to be found there. I counted eight, but mine was not among them. Then on we raced.

It was a rickety old car—a rackety old car; one wondered how it managed to go at all. But go it did; over the Viaduct, a turn to the right, up a hill, Amsterdam Avenue for a few blocks, an abrupt turn to the left, two blocks of Broadway, then into the beautiful Boule-

vard Lafayette. Of course they had come this way! Who would smother in the Park when he could look down upon the Hudson?

The tail lamp of an automobile twinkled in the distance.

"Approach that car," I ordered, "but do not pass it until I give the word."

We gained on it rapidly. Closer and closer we drew, till I could almost make out the numbers at the rear. Closer still—they were *my* numbers! It was *my* car!

"Follow them," I whispered hoarsely.

We followed them for, perhaps, a mile. Suddenly our quarry made a dash. Were they trying to escape? How absurd of me! They were preparing for the steep road, to take it on the high speed.

A car that can take that hill on the high speed is a corker. Mine could, but I had my doubts as to whether the venerable rattletrap in which I was seated could take it in any circumstances.

We managed it on a the low gear, with the muffler cut out. Our ascent was slow, a series of gasps and startling explosions.

At the top of the hill I discharged my driver. "You'd better stay round here a

while," I suggested. "I can almost guarantee you a load back to town."

A café ahead was ablaze with lights. People were dining on the porches, people were dining inside; there was a hum of voices, an occasional shrill laughter, the sound of clicking glass and popping corks. Avoiding the porches, I followed the path to the stables, where automobiles awaited the pleasure of their masters.

Yes, there was my beauty!

That rascally chauffeur was eating his dinner, with other rascally chauffeurs, in the little dining-room off the kitchen. Should I confront him there, and tax him with his dishonesty? Wouldn't it be better just to take the car and make off with it? That would prolong his agony. It would frighten him to death. By George, I'd do it! Only, how in the deuce was I to do it without a switch-plug?

I hastily examined the other cars. Perhaps, some careless fellow had forgotton to remove his switch-plug. Would you believe it? One had!

It took but a moment to install it, crank my engine and slide out into the road leading

to the rear entrance to the grounds, the road that baby two-cylinder cars and sick four-cylinders always travel when coming to this place, thereby avoiding the heart-breaking hill from the Boulevard.

I had fully intended to return the switch-plug, but——Some one was coming from the house. I glanced over my shoulder. It was a man in an automobile cap.

I suddenly felt like a thief.

"Hey, there!"

I paid no attention. Instead, I shot out into the darkness. There was no shifting of speeds. My car *was* a car! I had started her on the direct drive.

A few pursuing cries—then silence.

Feeling like a reckless Dick Turpin, and tingling with excitement, I skimmed along toward home. What a dashing adventure! I was almost grateful to the chauffeur for stealing my car. No, I wasn't, either. If I were grateful at all, I should be grateful to Jerry Spinner; such a thing could never have happened with him in the garage. But it was Jerry's day off.

IX

A PLEASANT night, a good road, with one's gas-lamps burning holes in the vague shadows ahead—and the whole world may go hang. One doesn't know what life is till one has motored at night.

As I skimmed along toward home I forgave everybody everything: Jimmie Redmond was a prince, the chauffeur who had stolen my car was an amiable lunatic, the adventure of the evening was a Heaven-sent diversion.

I whirled over the Viaduct, down Riverside Drive, past the tomb of an immortal General, past the palace of a mortal Steel Trust magnate, round the corner into Seventy-second Street, and plump into the arms of a brass-buttoned policeman.

Muttering curses, I jammed both brakes

home. This would make my third arrest for speeding!

Luckily, I had six one-hundred-dollar bonds of the Franklin Surety Company in my pocket for this very purpose. When one motors in New York one needs more than extra inner tubes, extra casings and a well-stocked tool-kit.

Quite meekly I allowed my burly captor to slide into the seat beside me.

"I guess you know where to drive to," he said.

Alas, I knew only too well! I had visited the station-house on West Sixty-sixth Street only the month before. Still, I wouldn't submit without a protest.

"My dear fellow——" I began.

"Cut it!" he commanded.

"But this is outrageous——"

"Aw, forget it!" he sneered.

"I wasn't doing more than ten miles an hour," I lied glibly, "and you can't prove that I was."

My captor chuckled. "You've got your nerve with you, young feller," he said. I guess you're an old offender, all right."

The pity of it was that he had guessed the

truth. Ten dollars' fine for offense number one. Fifty dollars' fine and a reprimand for offense number two. And now offense number three was hanging over my head! We made the rest of the run to the station in silence.

The sergeant on duty at the desk received me like a long-lost brother.

"It's him, all right," said my captor.

"It's the first decent haul we've made this week," remarked the sergeant. "You're a lucky dog, Mac. Did he resist arrest?"

"No," said Mac, "but he put on a swell front of outraged innocence."

"They're always innocent," observed the sergeant. "Got anything to say for yourself, young man?"

"Yes," I said; "I've got a lot to say."

"Better not say it," he counseled. "It'll be used against you later if you do."

"What rot!" I exclaimed. "To hear you talk one would think that exceeding the speed limit was a State's prison offense."

I hadn't intended a joke, but both the sergeant and my captor laughed heartily.

"Ain't he the goods, though? Ain't he the Candy Kid?" said Mac.

"You have a most primitive sense of humor," I responded hotly. "If it's security you want for my appearance in court, say so. I've had enough of your insolence."

"He's had enough of our insolence," repeated Mac. "Ain't he the giddy millionaire, though!"

"Chuck it, Mac!" commanded the sergeant. "What's your name, young feller?"

"William Snowden," I replied angrily.

"Where do you live?"

"At the Luxor Apartments, No. — Madison Avenue."

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed Mac.

"What's your occupation?"

"I haven't any."

"He's a blooming capitalist," said Mac.

"You be ——"

"Well, young feller, I've got you down on the book twice," remarked the sergeant.

"Twice!" I gasped.

"That's what I said—twice."

"May I be permitted to ask on what charges?"

"Certainly," said the sergeant, with a malevolent grin. "Burglary and grand larceny."

X

TO be charged with burglary and grand larceny, to have it entered in the police blotter by a goat of a sergeant, together with my name, address and lack of honest occupation—it was too screamingly absurd! Also it was as plain as day how it had come about: that rascally chauffeur had telephoned the police, and the order had gone forth to arrest the driver of car No. 33756 N. Y.

"Ring up the restaurant, Mac," said the sergeant, "and tell them the good news."

That settled it.

Well, there was no use trying to establish my identity—the chauffeur who had taken my car from the garage would do that for me. I'd sit by quietly till he turned up. Wouldn't he have a fit when he saw what a scrape he'd

got into? Yes, I'd sit by quietly and smoke a cigarette.

"Take that hand out of that pocket!" roared the sergeant.

"You go to blazes!" I returned. "It's my pocket, isn't it?"

"Search him, Mac," ordered the sergeant.

"I'll be good," I promised meekly.

"You bet your life you will," said the sergeant. "This would be a good one for Rooker —eh, Mac?"

"Yes," agreed Mac. "I guess I'd better ring him up."

I wondered who in thunder Rooker was. I was soon to learn, alas, that Rooker was city editor of the yellowest morning newspaper published in New York!

"He'll send a man out at once," Mac announced.

"If news is scarce, they'll play it up big," prophesied the sergeant.

"Maybe they'll run my picture," ventured Mac hopefully.

"You're a lucky dog, Mac," said the sergeant.

"And they'll have to stop throwing it in your face that nothing ever happens at the

Sixty-sixth Street Station," added Mac diplomatically.

The situation had now resolved itself into a race between Rooker's man and the chauffeur. If the chauffeur arrived first I would, at least, escape a personal interview. If the reporter arrived first, Heaven help William Snowden!

The next ten minutes was the longest ten minutes I have ever experienced. Would that miserable chauffeur never come?

An automobile chugged up to the station-house and stopped before the door. I sprang to my feet.

"Sit down!" commanded the sergeant.

I sat down.

"See who it is, Mac," he ordered.

Mac strode through the door and disappeared.

"I wish very much to see the chauffeur who claims the car," I announced to the sergeant.

"You can take it from me that you ain't half as anxious to see him as he is for to see you," chuckled the sergeant.

"I'm not so sure of that," I replied.

"We'll see," said the sergeant.

Just wouldn't we see, though! I pictured the whole scene in my mind: a groveling

chauffeur, my discomfited captor, an apologetic sergeant, and Virtue Triumphant in the shape of one William Snowden, Esq. Oh, we'd see, right enough! There was Mac, now. And behind him—not at all the person I had expected to see—was the chauffeur who had driven me to the restaurant.

"I got a load back, all right," he announced, grinning derisively.

"But where's the other chauffeur?" I asked.

"Don't worry, he's coming," said Mac.

"When he does come it will be you who's worried," I replied.

"Here he is now," said the sergeant.

I turned to confront the poor wretch. It was Charlie, the new boy at the garage, whom Jerry Spinner had tried to warn me against.

"Good evening, Mr. Snowden," he said, touching his cap.

"Do you know this man?" asked the sergeant.

"Certainly," answered Charlie. "He's the owner of the car that was stolen."

"I don't believe it," said Mac.

"It's a plant—a deliberate plant!" cried the sergeant.

"By ringing up the Reliance Garage you can verify my statement," said Charlie, who, by the way, wasn't groveling a bit. In fact, he was quite the coolest young devil I had ever had the misfortune to encounter. "But where," he continued, "is the man who stole the car?"

"Where is he?" roared the sergeant.

"Yes, where is he?"

"Why, you've just been talking to him, you young idiot!"

"It was I who took the car," I confessed.

"Mr. Snowden has a perfect right to take his own car," Charlie declared.

"I hope you are satisfied at last that I am the owner of the car," I said, turning to the sergeant.

"I dunno," he replied doubtfully.

"If you care to see some engraved cards with my name on them——" I continued.

"How about them people outside?" interrupted Mac.

"What people?" demanded the sergeant.

"The parties I took out to the restaurant," Charlie explained.

"Bring 'em in," said the sergeant.

"The old lady refuses to come," Mac an-

nounced a moment later, "but the other two will be here in a minute."

We all turned expectantly, our eyes on the door. What other miserable people were to be dragged into this miserable affair? Who were they, and how had they happened to go riding in my car?

A girl, accompanied by a man whom I'd seen once before, walked into the room.

The sergeant pointed to me. "Do you know this man?" he asked.

The man shook his head.

The girl stared in astonishment. "Why, it's Bill Snow!" she said.

A girl, accompanied by a man whom I had seen once before, walked into the room.

XI

I SHALL never forget that awful moment. With my identity shattered beyond all hope of immediate repair, I stared helplessly about me, into the cynical eyes of the sergeant, into the triumphant eyes of Mac, into the astonished eyes of Charlie, into the wondering eyes of Marian Standish, into the unsympathetic eyes of her handsome escort. Alas, poor Bill Snow! The high-tension wires of Fate had short-circuited with the cylinders of Chance and his sixty-horse-power romance had come to a sudden stop in a police station. Could anything be more sordid, more mortifying, more humiliating!

And, while I was staring impotently, Rooker's reporter was swooping down on us from the direction of Park Row. I saw a front-page story, under sensational headlines,

with pictures of Marian, Mac and me. Not that! No, sir; not if I had to corrupt the whole police force, to buy the front page of every newspaper in New York! But I must warn her. She must leave at once. Her escort would understand.

"My advice to you, sir," I said, stepping up to the only uninterested spectator of my disgrace, "is to cut out of here with the young lady. There's a reporter heading this way, who may take it into his head to include her in the story he's after."

"By Jove," exclaimed the handsome chap, "that's not bad advice, Marian!"

"Just a minute," said the sergeant.

"Go at once," I begged.

"How about my bill?" asked their chauffeur.

"How about his bill?" asked Marian, pointing to Charlie.

"I'll settle both bills, and send you my account through the post. Don't waste a moment."

"I want my money now," said the restaurant chauffeur.

I drew a wallet from my pocket.

"But I can't allow you to do that," said Marian.

"Please go!" I implored.

"And you positively identify this man as Bill Snow?" asked the sergeant.

"No, I don't," replied Marian.

"Of course she does," I said.

"Shall I take them home, Mr. Snowden?" asked Charlie.

"Yes, at once," I answered.

"He can't go," said the sergeant.

"The deuce he can't!" I returned.

"The kid's an accomplice," said Mac.

"He'll come back as soon as he's taken them home," I promised.

"Most likely," sneered Mac.

"Here's Rooker's man now," said the sergeant, as a lean, sharp-nosed youth, with a face like a fox terrier, bounded into the room.

"Hullo, Bellows!" said Mac.

"Hullo!" said Bellows. "Something doing in my line, eh? Good-evening, sergeant. How do you do, Mr. Snowden?"

I gasped with surprise. The sergeant gasped with surprise. Mac gasped with surprise.

"Do you know him?" demanded the sergeant.

"Why, of course," answered the omniscient

Mr. Bellows; "everybody in New York knows Mr. Snowden. I handled the story for my paper that time you bowled over Bishop Jenning's brougham on the Avenue," he added, with a touch of professional pride.

"Awfully glad to see you again, old chap," I said, wringing his hand. "I've got into no end of a scrape, and you're just the man to help me out. Charlie, take Mr. and Mrs. Porter home. I'll stay here and talk to Mr. Bellows."

Marian eyed me with indignant surprise, but her escort took his cue like a veteran—confound him!"

"Come along, dear," he said; "Billy is right; we might as well go home."

XII

NOW, Bellows, old chap," I began.

"Just a minute, Mr. Snowden," said Bellows, reaching for his pencil and copy-paper.

"There's really nothing to make a story about," I declared. "It's a trivial case of mistaken identity, that's all."

"Mistaken identity? Why, that's great, Mr. Snowden; better than I'd hoped for!"

"He stole his own car," interrupted the sergeant.

"And he's down on the blotter for burglary and grand larceny," said Mac.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Mr. Bellows. "Simply ripping!"

"If you must write something, I hope you'll properly roast the sergeant," I said vindictively.

"But that would spoil the story," protested Mr. Bellows.

"The lady identified him as Bill Snow," growled the sergeant.

"Merely a pet name," I defended.

"By the way, who are Mr. and Mrs. Porter?" asked Mr. Bellows.

"Cousins of mine from Albany. I hope you won't include them in your story, Bellows.

"I'll only mention them," said Bellows. "Are they stopping with you?"

"They're at the Holland House," I lied brazenly.

"And you were dining together?"

"No. I lent them my car, with a chauffeur, this afternoon, and they promised to show up at my apartment at half-past six and take me to dinner at this café. It seems that they went for a longer ride than they had at first intended, for at quarter to seven they telephoned that they were too ravenously hungry to wait for dinner, so were dining without me. Naturally, that made me furious, so I hired an automobile, drove to the café, stole my own car and tooted back to town—just to get even, you know. Of course, Charlie, the chauffeur,

missed the car, and, supposing it had been stolen, telephoned the police, who captured me on West Seventy-second Street and brought me here."

"It's a pippin of a story!" said Bellows. "Hospitable millionaire—greedy cousins from the country—unique revenge—police—burglary—grand larceny—with a grand-stand finish! What did you say your cousin's first name was?"

"John," I said. "Between you and me, Bellows, I've never liked him."

"The lady identified him," persisted the sergeant.

"Yes," said Bellows. "How about the Bill Snow part, Mr. Snowden?"

"I hope you'll leave that part out of your story, Bellows. I'm er—er—rather fond of the lady, don't you know, and ——"

"I see," said the astute Mr. Bellows. "You can rely on my handling the lady with the greatest delicacy, Mr. Snowden. I say, Mac, you haven't put any of the other fellows on to this story, have you?"

"Not on your life," said Mac.

"If it's a beat for me, it's a box of cigars apiece for you and the sergeant."

"I'll multiply that by ten, with a hundred boxes for yourself, Bellows, if you don't print the story at all," I promised.

"Oh, I couldn't do that," said Bellows; "it wouldn't be honorable! A man can't throw down his paper, you know."

"I suppose not," I replied dismally. "Maybe I could fix it up with your managing editor. Who is managing editor of your paper now, Bellows?"

"Jack Halliday," said Bellows.

"Halliday!" I groaned.

"Know him?"

"Rather! You've noticed that broken nose of his?"

"Sure, I have."

"Well, I broke it for him," I confessed.

"You don't say so!" said the surprised Mr. Bellows.

"And I had him kicked out of the Lions' Club," I continued.

Bellows looked at me admiringly; some long-held grudge against his managing editor evidently rankled in his mind. "I can't kill the story, Mr. Snowden—I can't, honestly; but, if you don't mind, I'd like to shake hands with you," he said.

We shook hands solemnly.

"I'd like to shake hands, too," said the sergeant, edging toward us.

"Same here," said Mac.

"Halliday tried to break me last winter," continued the sergeant.

"Three months in Brooklyn is what he handed me," said Mac.

"If it wasn't for Bellows and Rooker, we'd hold out on him every time," declared the sergeant.

"Bet yer life we would," said Mac.

We shook hands almost affectionately.

"Every man must do his duty as he sees it," I remarked magnanimously.

"That's right," agreed the trio.

"I think I hear your automobile outside," Mac announced.

"Good-night, boys," I said. "I'll give you a lift as far as Times Square if you like, Bellows."

"Good-night, Mr. Snowden," said the sergeant. "You can count on me the next time you're run in."

Mac accompanied me to the curb. "Say, Mr. Snowden," he said in a low voice, "if you ever feel like hitting her up on Riverside

Drive, just go to it. I'll fix it up with the boys."

"That's very kind of you, Mac," I murmured.

"No," said Mac, "that ain't kindness—it's justice."

XIII

WITH Charlie at the wheel, we made for the Circle, then down Broadway. Nobody spoke a word. Bellows, no doubt, was thinking of the story he was to write, and Charlie, intent on an ever-present problem, was dodging cabs and shaving surface cars. As for myself, the events of the evening danced dizzily, a mad phantasmagoria, before my eyes: I was arrested for burglary, Marian was beside me in the police station, looking both sorry and indignant, while over and over again the sergeant repeated: "She identified him as Bill Snow. The lady called him Bill Snow."

Bellows left us in the glaring light of Times Square, diving into the Subway to catch a local for Grand Central, and from there an express to Park Row.

Times Square! The old name was good enough for me. What were we coming to, anyway? It used to be Longacre Square.

It suddenly occurred to me that I was hungry. By George, here it was ten o'clock, and I hadn't dined yet!

The lights of a famous restaurant beckoned to me. Its patrons were all at the theatre, and it didn't scruple to turn an honest penny during their absence.

A moment later we drew up in front of a well-known chop-house. "Come in and share a steak with me, Charlie," I said.

Once inside, I ordered a large porterhouse.

It takes a pair of knaves to open a jackpot, and a parson and a prayer to open the Senate. But the proper opener for a peace conference is a large porterhouse steak.

My hunger satisfied, I was no longer in the mood to shake my fist at the world.

"Now, lad," I said, "tell me all about it."

"About my taking out your car this evening?"

"Yes, Charlie."

"Well, sir, a man rang up the garage, about half-past six, and said he was your man Collins, I think he called himself."

I felt like apologizing to him, and I did so—with a twenty-dollar bill.

"Go on."

"And he told me you wanted your car sent around to Number — Central Park West. I asked Sam if it was all right (I haven't been with the Reliance people very long, you know), and Sam told me to go ahead and take the car to the address your man had given me. When I got there I rang the bell, expecting to leave the car and cut back to the garage, but the young lady asked me to drive for her, so I did. That's all, Mr. Snowden."

"Did she—er—seem surprised to see you, Charlie?"

"Yes, sir; I think she did."

And this was the lad whom Jerry Spinner had mistrusted, whom I myself had cursed for a rogue and a rascal! I felt like apologizing to him, and I did so—with a twenty-dollar bill.

"It has been rather an unusual night for us both, Charlie."

"It has, indeed, sir," he replied with a satisfied smile.

I now burned to get home and question Collins. Not that I needed to question him, for I thought I understood exactly what had

happened: Marian must have telephoned, not long after I had started for my walk, and when she had asked for Bill Snow, Collins, realizing how important it was, had promptly thrown himself into the breach.

No, Bill Snow wasn't in. Was there anything he could do?

Yes. She wanted the automobile at a quarter to seven. Could she have it?

"Certainly, miss. Where shall I send it?"

"Number — Central Park West, please."

"Thank you, miss. Good-by."

Where I had been such an ass was to believe that Marian couldn't possibly ring up again. But hadn't I seen her with my two eyes, talking to Jimmie Redmond?

It seemed that I had misjudged Jimmie, also. He had kept his own counsel—good old Jimmie! He was a dear, discreet fellow, and I loved him.

Of course, Collins had set out in search of me as soon as he'd hung up the receiver. Not finding me, he had made good by ordering the car sent around.

Well, there would be no more Bill Snow excitement, that was certain. His name was Mud now, forever and ever.

Collins' story coincided exactly with my theory as to what had happened.

"I hope I didn't do wrong, sir," he said, in conclusion.

"I'm sure you acted most intelligently, Collins," I replied.

"I made my mistake in going down the Avenue, instead of up," he continued. "You see, sir, I thought you would walk toward your club."

"And I made my mistake in going up the Avenue, instead of down," I said. "I've had a rather exciting evening, Collins. Among other things, I've been arrested for burglary and grand larceny."

"My word!" gasped Collins.

"By the way, I'd like to have a copy of the Dispatch with my coffee to-morrow morning."

"Anything else, sir?"

"No, Collins. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir. I'm very sorry things went wrong, sir."

I paced up and down my sitting-room for some time before retiring. What in thunder would that story in the Dispatch be like? Why in thunder did I have to go and get myself into such a bally mess? And who in

thunder was that good-looking chap who had gone riding with Marian in my car? After all, that was the question that worried me most.

"Come along, dear; Billy is right. We might as well go home." Those were his exact words.

"*Dear!*"

XIV

I AWOKE next morning with a sense of impending unpleasantness. After a yawn or two, I remembered what the day held for me.

If Bellows had made a clean beat of it for his paper I needn't worry till the afternoon papers were on the street, for nobody read the Dispatch—that is, nobody west of Madison Avenue.

Of course, my cousin John Porter, from Albany, might be a regular subscriber (he looked quite capable of it), but none of my friends was, thank Heaven! And even Cousin John would have the decency not to send a marked copy of the Dispatch to Marian.

But, perhaps, some other enterprising reporter had stumbled on the story. What an ass I'd been not to tell Collins to buy all the

morning papers! I'd do so at once, and he could run out and get them while I was in my bath.

When Collins returned I was dressed in an old brown suit—the one I had worn the day I had taken Marian and Tou-tou and Aunt Elizabeth for a ride—the one with the dollar sewed safe in the waistcoat pocket. If things got too hot for me, I'd hop into my car and make a dash for Long Island, by George!

With my coffee on the table in front of me, the Dispatch at my elbow, I ordered Collins to glance through the papers he had just bought, and, if he saw anything about my being arrested, to mark it and lay it aside for me. Then I opened the Dispatch.

It wouldn't be on the front page, of course. By Jove, it was, though! Almost a column of it, sandwiched in between The Latest Armenian Atrocities and the Unprecedented Flurry in Chewing Gum, Preferred. Oh, it was there, safe enough!

LATEST ESCAPADE OF MILLIONAIRE SNOWDEN

MOTOR-MAD MEMBER OF THE EXCLUSIVE AMSTERDAM CLUB STEALS AUTOMOBILE

IS ARRESTED FOR BURGLARY

SNOWDEN'S DEFENSE: "COUSINS WERE GREEDY; THE AUTOMOBILE WAS MINE"

There followed a hectic version of my last night's adventure, in which "*William Snowden, member of New York's most exclusive clubs, and sole heir of the late Commodore Snowden, of the Knickerbocker Yacht Club,*" was held up as a horrible example of the unemployed rich, while his new found cousin, Mr. John Porter, of Albany, was painted as a gluttonous gourmand with a singularly beautiful young wife. And that was what Bellows called "handling the lady with the greatest delicacy!"

Wouldn't the editor of the Dispatch have a fit, though, when he discovered that there were no such persons as Mr. and Mrs. John Porter stopping at the Holland House? Wouldn't the afternoon papers make my life miserable for me? Wouldn't Bellows rage when he learned that I had deceived him—that I had no cousins? And wouldn't the other morning papers (by this time Collins had been through the lot and had found no mention of my name) sneer at the Dispatch under such likely caption as this:

REPORTER ON THE DISPATCH IS HANDED GOLD BRICK BY MOTOR-MANIAC

Our Albany Correspondent wires:
"SNOWDEN'S COUSINS DO NOT EXIST"

And wouldn't they all get busy and print copies of my uncle's, the Commodore's will, and photographs of my apartment house? And wouldn't they turn New York upside down in search of Mr. and Mrs. John Porter? Just wouldn't they?

By Jove, I'd better get busy myself! I'd ring up the garage and have Charlie bring the car over at eleven, and at the same time warn him to keep his mouth shut if any reporters turned up. Then I'd get the club on the wire and order two boxes of their best cigars sent to the Sixty-sixth Street police station, one for "the sergeant on duty at the time of Mr. Snowden's arrest" (I didn't know his name) and the other for "Mac, with Mr. Snowden's compliments." Then I'd ring up Jimmie Redmond. Then I'd ——

I quite forgot the fourth item on my mental list, for the telephone began ringing, and it rang, and it rang, and it rang.

"Would Mr. Snowden see a representative of the Evening World?"

"No."

"Would Mr. Snowden see a representative of the Telegram?"

"No!"

"Would Mr. Snowden see a representative of the Evening Journal?"

"No!!"

"Would Mr. Snowden see a representative of the Mail and Express?"

"No!!!"

"He might as well, for they'd print the story anyway."

"Print it and be ——!"

I managed to get in my telephone call to the garage, somehow. I asked for Charlie.

Charlie wasn't about.

Where was Charlie?

He wasn't working there any longer.

The deuce he wasn't! Had he quit?

No. He'd been discharged.

Been discharged?

Yes. Who was this, please?

This was Mr. Snowden.

Oh! It was Mr. Snowden! "After reading the Dispatch this morning, Mr. Snowden, I concluded that I didn't need Charlie any longer."

"Am I to understand that you discharged him on my account?"

"Certainly, sir. The young scoundrel was plainly responsible for your arrest."

By this time I was beside myself. "Why, you mountain of imbecility!" I roared, "Charlie's the best driver you've got! If you don't take him back at once—at once, mind—I'll build a garage next to yours, and hire him to take charge of it!"

"I'll send for him right away, Mr. Snowden."

"You'd better," I said. "I want my car this morning, and I want Charlie to bring it to me. If he isn't here by eleven, I'm done with your garage, and done with you. Do you understand?"

I hung up the receiver, only to take it down again.

"Could Miss Dobbins, of the Herald, see Mr. Snowden in his apartment at two?"

"Certainly not!"

"At one, then?"

"No. Miss Dobbins couldn't see Mr. Snowden at all."

Then Collins came into the room. "You know those reporters, Mr. Snowden?"

"What reporters, Collins?"

"The ones that have been telephoning to

you all morning. Well, sir, I've just found it out from one of the hall-boys: they're all lined up on the front steps, waiting for you to come down.'

XV

I HEARD Collins' interesting announcement with indifference. No doubt half the reporters waiting for me below were armed with cameras. Well, what of it? I only hoped that all the reporters in New York were on my trail, for the one thought that bothered me now was that they might find out who Mrs. John Porter really was. Perhaps, I ought to telephone to Marian and warn here of her danger. Reporters were such devilishly enterprising people; they were almost sure to find her, sooner or later. But, maybe, the telephone wasn't in her name.

There were at least thirty Standishes in the telephone-book—Martha, Michael, Millicent—but no Marian.

What a fool I'd been not to look at the

street numbers! Here it was now: "561 Riverside—Standish, Elizabeth." That was Aunt Elizabeth, of course.

As I took down the receiver I felt as I imagine a soldier might when about to be court-martialed for a grave offense. "Is this 561 Riverside?" I asked in a trembling voice.

"Yes."

"Is Miss Marian Standish in?"

"Who is this, please?"

"This is Mr. Snowden."

"Miss Standish is out of town, Mr. Snowden. Is there any message?"

"Er—no," I faltered.

A click at the other end of the wire told me that the person to whom I had been talking had hung up. And to whom had I been talking? Was it Marian, herself? Was it Aunt Elizabeth? Or was it a maid? And, most important of all, was Marian really out of town, or was she only out of town to Mr. William Snowden?

I felt snubbed, sat upon, distinctly unhappy. Of course, she wasn't out of town. Well, I'd done my best to warn her, and very possibly she was out of town, after all.

The next thing was to locate Jimmie Red-

mond. I simply had to see Jimmie. I'd make him go to Long Island with me, by George! He was a loyal little devil; he'd see me through this affair, and he'd fix it up for me to meet Marian, too. Now that Bill Snow was dead, I'd have to pin all my hopes on Jimmie. How in blazes had he managed to meet Marian, anyway?

Alas, for my hopes! Although I tried every number I could think of, Jimmie was not to be found.

At two minutes to eleven Collins helped me into a long dust-coat; I donned cap and goggles. Now I was prepared to meet a battery of cameras, a regiment of reporters. It is comforting to know, in this prying world, that one is still permitted the disguise of goggles.

The tooting of a horn on the street below, a hasty glance from a window, and I knew that my car had arrived. Now for it!

As I descended in the elevator I debated as to what I should do.

"Good-morning, Mr. Snowden," chorused the reporters, as I stepped into view.

"Good-morning, boys," I said, nodding pleasantly.

"How about that story in the Dispatch this morning, Mr. Snowden?"

"It's substantially correct," I affirmed.

"Not the Holland House part?" said one.

"No," I admitted; "my cousins are not stopping at the Holland House."

"Get a picture of him in his chug wagon, Harry!"

"Snap him on the steps!"

These orders, issued to camera-carrying aides-de-camp by their respective generals, were promptly executed.

"Just a moment, Mr. Snowden. Was the gentleman who appeared at the station really your cousin?"

"He certainly was."

"And was the lady his wife?"

This question was too much for me. "Cut out of here, quick, Charlie," I growled. Then, as the car swung away from the curb, I turned and answered my tormentor.

"No, ——," I said; "she isn't his wife, and, what's more, she never will be!"

XVI

"WHERE to, sir?" asked Charlie, as we spun around a corner.

"Oh, anywhere!" I said, with the relieved sigh of a prisoner just escaped from a hostile band of Indians. Not that a few reporters more or less could make any difference—now. It wasn't to escape reporters that I was rushing off to Long Island; it was to escape my friends. I'd probably put up at one of the smaller country clubs on Long Island, and from there I'd burn the wires with messages till Jimmie Redmond turned up. There was no use in taking Charlie along with me, though; I'd drop him at the next corner.

Charlie took leave of me with many expressions of gratitude. "I'm back on the job again, thanks to you, Mr. Snowden," he said

"Oh, that's all right, Charlie! It was monstrous of Kelly to discharge you."

"I only hope he will let me stay."

"He'd better," I replied. "By the way, if those confounded reporters show up at the garage, you don't know anything about last night."

I now took the wheel, directing my course toward the East Side.

When I say that the Manhattan end of the Williamsburg Bridge is the hardest thing to find in New York, believe me, I do not exaggerate. It was a quarter to twelve when at last I succeeded in reaching it.

Once there, I handed the ticket, purchased with a dime I had discovered in a pocket of my dust-coat, to the man whose duty it is to collect this questionable tax. That accomplished, I proceeded sedately on my way, a flaming contrast to the shiny-black hearse now acting as my pacemaker.

Below me smart Sound steamers, clumsy excursion boats and panting tugs whistled insolently at one another. In front of me loomed Brooklyn, its shore-line a tangle of rigging, masts and spars, its tall factory chimneys fouling the air with smoke and

punctuating the broken sky-line like huge exclamation points. In the middle distance an occasional church spire pointed Heavenward; for Brooklyn, be it known, is the champion church city of the United States.

I have often wondered if that accounts for the execrable paving of its streets along the water-front; if the good intentions, fostered by the churches, are in some way responsible for—say, Jackson Avenue.

But surely not. The man who paved Jackson Avenue was, as every automobile owner knows, inspired by the Evil One.

A happier lot than Jackson Avenue was awaiting me, however. Once off of the bridge, I dodged past the hearse, which most probably had inspired these melancholy thoughts, and, after some zigzagging in and out and around corners, emerged into Bedford Avenue.

Forty minutes later I was tempting the police on the Jericho Pike.

XVII

AS I spun along the Jericho Pike, I thought of the first time I had seen Marian, at the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Lexington Avenue. What a strange place for one's romance to begin; in front of a drug store, too! Stranger still for one's romance to end in the Sixty-sixth Street police station. It sounded uncommonly sordid. But it was true, all except the ending part. My romance hadn't ended. No, sir; it had only just begun. The next time I saw Marian (Jimmie Redmond must manage that part) it would be in somebody's drawing-room, where we could talk to each other like Christians, where I could explain away the fiction of Bill Snow (poor Bill Snow!) and appear in my true character—a devoted and adoring William Snowden.

She might snub me unmercifully at first; she probably would, but she'd have to give in sooner or later; I couldn't bear, I wouldn't bear, her not loving me. She simply had to love me. Here it was the fifth of May. If we could only be married in June, that would be perfect. We'd go to the St. Lawrence, of course; we'd make the trip in the very car I was driving; we'd spend the summer on my island—the nicest island in the whole "Thousand," by George!—and we'd invite Aunt Elizabeth, and Tou-tou, the black poodle, to spend September with us.

So I dreamed my dreams while the speedometer ticked off the miles.

It wasn't till I had reached Krug's Corner that I realized I was hungry. As I was heading for no place in particular, I might as well stop there for luncheon. Krug's Corner! That's where Jimmie Redmond and I had had that delicious cup of coffee, the morning of the Vanderbilt Cup Race. Mighty early in the morning it was, too, long before sunup. I'd try a pot of their coffee now. Awful dissipation, to drink coffee at noon; but why shouldn't I dissipate? Lots of fellows, in my place, would have started drowning their

sorrows in champagne, right after breakfast. Still, sorrows, as a rule, didn't drown easily; they have a horrid way of bubbling to the surface and leering at a fellow over the rim of his glass. Besides, Bill Snow was safe, sane and conservative on the drink question. No, I'd order coffee, and a broiled squab, and a nice salad that I'd dress myself.

I ran my car into one of Krug's sheds, and with the switch-plug safe in my pocket (the switch-plug I had stolen at The Abbey, by the way) I entered Krug's dining-room and seated myself at one of Krug's tables. A Krug waiter glided in with a Krug *menu* in his hand, and took my order. I then dived into my pocket for my cigar-case. It wasn't there. It wasn't in any of my pockets. I'd come off without it.

A sickening presentiment now crept over me that, in the unprecedented excitement of the morning, Collins had failed to transfer any of my belongings from the pockets of the clothes I had worn the previous evening. Such, alas proved to be the case! My wallet was missing, my keys were missing, my check-book was missing, and, worst of all, I hadn't a single, solitary sou. Of my valuables, only

my watch remained; that being the one article I was in the habit of looking after myself.

How in thunder had I got across the Williamsburg Bridge? How had I managed to dig up that dime? I had found it in the pocket of my dust-coat, of course. Cursing Collins for an addlepated imbecile, I now turned to my dust-coat as a last resort.

There were three pockets: two large ones and a small one. Pocket number one held a box of matches and a cotterpin; pocket number two held a pair of goggles and a silk handkerchief; pocket number three held—certainly there was something in it! A nickel, a penny, a second penny, and—that was all.

Seven cents! Seven miserable, measly cents! Not enough to pay for a telephone message to Manhattan. Not even enough to take me across the Bridge. I'd have to run back to Brooklyn and pawn something; my watch ought to be good for fifty at the very least, and, if worst came to worst, there were gas-lamps. I suddenly remembered the dollar sewed tight in my waistcoat pocket—the dollar I couldn't spend—Marian's dollar. It was too utterly absurd!

I beckoned to my waiter who was hovering in the distance. "I sha'n't want anything to eat," I said.

"But, sir, it's already ordered."

"Cancel the order, then."

"I'm afraid it's too late, sir."

"Look here," I said, "I've come off without any money."

"Oh, that's all right, sir! I'm sure if you'd speak to the proprietor ——"

"I don't feel like explaining things to proprietors," I demurred.

"I hope you won't think me bold, sir, but I'd be very glad to accommodate you myself."

I was, however, in no mood to accept favors from anybody. "While I appreciate your offer, and am no end obliged, I must insist on your canceling the order if possible," I said.

He returned from the kitchen, a moment later, with success written on his face. "It's all right, sir," he assured me.

"You've been uncommonly decent about it," I said, "and I sha'n't forget it."

"Oh, that was nothing!" he protested. "We all has our ups and downs, sir."

He helped me into my dust-coat and bowed

me to the door, did this prince of waiters, and as I walked toward the shed that sheltered my car, I felt more at peace with the world than I had for some time. To be sure, I was still hungry, but the memory of that unexpected kindness was worth a dozen luncheons. One day I'd return to Krug's Corner with a pocketful of money, and show that waiter I appreciated what he'd done for me, by George!

XVIII

AS I backed out from Krug's shed into the Jericho Pike, I wondered what I should do next. The thought of returning to Brooklyn was distasteful to a degree. Let me see, I could run over to Hempstead, or, in the opposite direction, to Port Washington, or I could —— But what a goose I'd been to forget Roslyn—Roslyn, and Primrose Court, and Tom Studleigh and Mrs. Tom! It was only a half-hour's run, at most. Come to think of it, I had had a note from Mrs. Tom inviting me down for the week-end, and to-day was Saturday, of course.

That made it bad again; there were bound to be other guests. Still, Mrs. Tom never had many people down for over Sunday. I could run over and see how the land lay; if I didn't like the looks of things, I needn't stay. Also,

I could telephone to Collins from there, and have him bring my things—clothes and check-book. Best of all, I could borrow what money I needed from Tom.

I didn't need money half so much as I needed sympathy, though. Yes, sympathy was what William Snowden needed most just now—sympathy and advice. I could count on dear old Tom for advice. Oh, rather! And Mrs. Tom would be sympathetic, and kind, and motherly in a nice way; she'd make a fuss over me, and ask me all about Marian, too. That's what I really wanted: to talk to somebody about Marian, and to have somebody pat me on the head and tell me I was a silly, sentimental young thing. I wanted something to eat, too.

Roslyn it was, then—Primrose Court with a hop, skip and a jump. Toot! Toot!

What matter if I was arrested for speeding? Tom could bail me out. What's the use of having six cylinders if a fellow isn't allowed to enjoy them? One might as well own a one-cylinder car!

The faster I flew, the more recklessly defiant I became. I didn't care if Mrs. Tom had forty guests stopping with her; I didn't care

if every single one of them had read about my arrest in the Dispatch; further, I didn't care a continental for anybody's opinion of me—except Marian's, of course—and, further still, I never would. In this enviable frame of mind, I passed the Lodge and turned into the avenue leading to Primrose Court.

The Lodge, by the way, was an exact copy of one adorning Lord Wimbleton's Hertfordshire estate. Indeed, Primrose Court, stables, kennels and all, had been cribbed from that worthy gentleman's possessions.

Not that Wimbleton minded it. He and Tom were thick as thieves, and it made him feel "deuced comfortable to visit a place where a fellah can find his way about with his eyes shut, don'tcher know?"

Good old Tom, with his hothouses full of orchids (Lord Wimbleton collected orchids) with his sheep-infested lawns ("a bally nuisance, sheep, but you ought to see Wimbleton's!"), and his picture-gallery full of bogus Old Masters! How often have I called him a silly copy-cat, and begged Wimbleton to build a garage at Wimbleton Towers, so that Tom might feel at liberty to add one to his ten-year-old ancestral pile.

But Lord Wimbleton couldn't afford garages; he could hardly afford to keep up Wimbleton Towers. As for Tom, Tom insisted that his stables were good enough for the best automobile ever built, and if he risked setting them on fire, his guests could, too. Besides, there wasn't any risk. If any one thought there was, he'd show them his insurance policies with their special gasoline clause.

So I glided along the main avenue of Tom's imported paradise, dodging three Southdown sheep and a wicked old ram, and tooting vindictively at the screaming peacocks on the terraces.

Should I stop under the *porte-cochère*, or make a dash for the stables? Should I enter the house by the front door, a side door or a back door? (Fortunately, all the servants knew me, and would extend me the courtesy of the coal chute, if I insisted upon it.) Or should I send one of the grooms to Tom with a note?

Bah! What a coward I was getting to be! I'd stop under the *porte-cochère* like any other invited, self-respecting guest. I'd pay my respects to my hostess first, and attend to

driving my car to the stables afterward. Passing a last mournful, expatriated sheep, I emerged into full view of Primrose Court.

A friendly shout welcomed me from the terrace in front of the house. Two automobiles blocked the entrance to the *porte-cochère*.

"You're just in time, Billy," called Mrs. Tom, as, changing my course, I drew up within easy range. "We're all going over to the Country Club for tea."

"There's a match on," announced Tom.

"How's the mad young millionaire to-day?" inquired fat Sam Partridge.

"Cut it, Sam," commanded Mrs. Badminton-Eckles. "He sha'n't tease you, Billy."

"You've got to tell me all about it," said pretty, blond Mrs. Willie Hemington.

"Everybody confides in Mrs. Willie," declared Jack Vernon, her callow admirer.

"Except Willie," I reminded him.

"Stop fighting, Billy," said Mrs. Tom. "If you want to be decent, you can wait here for the primping young lady and the fastidious young man who are delaying our departure. We're late enough as it is."

"I'm frightfully hungry," I objected, "and

I want to telephone to Collins. I came off without any clothes."

"But you can telephone from the club."

"All right," I said; "I'll do it."

"By-by, Billy."

"By-by, folkses."

"See you later, old man."

"Don't forget to order tea for me," I called after them. "I say, whom am I waiting for, anyway?"

"Whom do you suppose?" asked young Vernon, who was tagging along after Mrs. Willie Hemington.

"I'm no mind-reader," I answered testily.

"Don't be a bear, Billy," said Mrs. Tom. "You're waiting for Jimmie Redmond."

"Jimmie Redmond!" I cried.

"And a pretty girl from San Francisco," interrupted Sam Partridge.

"Maybe you've met her," said Mrs. Tom. "She's the niece of an old friend of mother's Her name's Standish—Marian Standish."

XIX

MARIAN STANDISH at Primrose Court! At first I could neither believe my ears nor credit my good fortune. It seemed too wonderful to be true. It *was* too wonderful to be true. Yet Mrs. Tom was not the sort to kindle false hopes. Maybe it was true, after all.

How like Jimmie to bob up at this time—at this time of all others. I only hoped he would appear on the terrace before Marian did.

No, by George, I hoped Marian would appear first!

It would be frightfully embarrassing without Jimmie to help explain things, though. Come to think of it, I had never been properly introduced to Marian; I could hardly manage that by myself. It was common-

sense, then, to wish that Jimmie would show up first.

No, it wasn't, either.

Yes, it was, too.

What I wished most at that moment, if you want the truth, was that I could cut and run. You may despise me for a coward, if you will, but the idea of facing Marian after all that had happened—What would she say to me? Would she say anything? How, in Heaven's name, was I to explain things, if she refused to speak to me? She might very well refuse to speak to me. She would be entirely justified in refusing. No doubt, she would refuse.

On the whole, I much preferred that Jimmie should appear first. Not that a preference of mine counted for anything. It was up to Fate, now, and she would pull whichever string she saw fit.

It was quite out of my calculations that Fate could pull two strings at once, and when, a moment later, the front door swung open and Jimmie and Marian stepped out on the terrace together, I was too completely taken by surprise to do more than sit still and stare, with the word "Astonishment" written all over me.

Not that I was the only still, staring and astonished young person; there were two others on the terrace, equally still, equally staring, equally astonished. And one of them was a Goddess, a dear, bewitching slip of a Goddess, and the other was an Oaf, a grimacing, imbecile young Oaf who desolated the landscape by his presence.

How long William Snowden sat and stared at the Oaf and the Goddess, how long the Oaf and the Goddess stood and stared at William Snowden, I don't pretend to know. In justice to the Oaf, I must admit that it was he, after all, who saved the situation. The Oaf laughed—a Heaven-born laugh for which I blessed him then, for which I shall always bless him.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he roared. "Well, if this isn't the best ever! Ha! ha! ha!"

"I'm glad to afford you amusement," I said, glancing at Marian, who was smiling—yes, actually smiling!

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jimmie. "What are you doing here, Billy Snowden?"

"I'm here, by Mrs. Tom's orders, to take her two tardy guests to the Country Club," I explained.

"He's here to take us to the Country Club," giggled Jimmie.

Suddenly remembering my manners, I clambered down from the car and removed my cap. "I hope to have that honor," I said.

Having established this splendid precedent of politeness, I now waited for Jimmie to remember his manners. It took him some time, I'll be bound. Indeed, I began to fear that he would never remember them—worse still, that he had none to remember. When at last he did give me the chance to admit that I'd never had the honor of meeting Miss Standish, instead of looking pleased, his eyebrows actually disappeared into his hat with surprise.

"Why, I thought of course you knew each other," he blundered.

It was no end embarrassing all around, and I hastily changed the subject. "Mrs. Tom will never forgive me if you fail to show up at the Country Club," I said.

"That's so," said Jimmie; "I'd forgotten all about the Country Club. Shall we let Mr. Snowden drive us over, Miss Standish?"

"I see no reason why we shouldn't," she replied.

"Of course, if Mr. Redmond doesn't care to go ——" I began.

"Oh, I'm going!" said Jimmie. "Don't worry. Miss Standish and I will sit in the tonneau."

Inwardly cursing Jimmie for an officious little devil, I cranked viciously, then, climbing into my seat in front, swung the car sharply around. In another moment my passengers were safe in the tonneau. Once more Marian was going ride-a-by with Bill Snow—with Jimmie Redmond too, worse luck!

I was on the point of throwing in the clutch when Jimmie asked if I hadn't a rug of some sort.

No, I hadn't a rug.

"But, my dear fellow, Miss Standish will freeze to death without one."

It was a beautifully warm afternoon; nevertheless Jimmie quite unceremoniously bolted for the house. As he passed me, he winked—at least, I thought he winked.

"I'll be back with a rug in forty shakes!" he called from the terrace, before disappearing into the house.

Would you believe that it took twenty of those forty shakes for me to realize what it

was Jimmie had meant by that wink? Why, the dear, good, thoughtful fellow had even shut the tonneau door before leaving! Here was my chance, the chance for which I had prayed so fervently. Here it was at last, a gift from the gods—and Jimmie Redmond.

With my heart in my mouth, I speeded up my engine and threw in my clutch. Hurrah, we were off!

I glanced behind me at Marian's startled face; at Jimmie, who, having emerged from the house, was dancing a war-dance on the terrace.

A moment later we whizzed past the Lodge and into a road that did not lead to the Country Club.

XX

IN the exhilaration of the moment, I felt as brave as a lion. Marian safe in the tonneau, Bill Snow at the wheel, what more could I ask? The road, unlike the course of true love, stretched before us smooth as glass; the coils hummed merrily to a six-cylinder accompaniment.

There is no music more pleasing to the ear, it seems to me, than this music of coil and cylinder. Even so, the music is monotonous, you say. Why not vary it, then? You wish a change in *tempo?* Certainly. A sextet of cylinders will obey the throttle as readily as your trained musician obeys his conductor's baton; one can manage a beautiful *crescendo* whenever one pleases; an artistic *diminuendo* may be introduced at any moment. If it is your desire to climb yonder hill *pianissimo*,

try the third speed; if you prefer to mount it *fortissimo*, engage the second speed and the muffler cut-out.

But enough of these musician-like maunderings! Let us return to the road stretching before us smooth as glass, to Marian in the tonneau, to Bill Snow at the wheel.

Except that I should have very much preferred having Marian on the front seat beside me, my happiness was complete, till I fell to wondering how she was taking it; what she was thinking. Was she angry?

At this stage my courage deserted me completely; I wasn't a brave lion at all—I was a lamb, a timid, cowardly lamb. By Jove, I mustn't show it, though! I'd glance over my shoulder at the next telegraph pole and see for myself how she was taking it. I passed that pole, and the next, and the next—in all, I counted thirty-three poles—and still I lacked the requisite courage.

Perhaps I'd manage it when I reached that tree yonder. I throttled down the engine so as not to reach the tree too quickly; I passed the tree, only to discover, alas, that the courage I sought was not roosting in its branches.

Well, if I couldn't be courageous, I could

at least be reckless. I'd stop the car, by George! That's what I'd do. I'd stop it now, this minute. I'd pull to the side of the road under that big beech.

A turn to the right, out clutch, down brake, a kick for the switch! There we were, safe and snug, with a canopy of leaves overhead to shelter us from the sun, and a dead engine for a chaperon. Now to look into Marian's eyes—to explain, to plead, to placate. Trembling with eagerness and apprehension, I faced squarely about.

I didn't speak first, she didn't speak first; nobody spoke first. Perhaps you, yourself, have suddenly become tongue-tied in the presence of Love? Perhaps you understand perfectly the silence of that moment?

Be that as it may. I had faced about prepared to find an angry Marian, a haughty Marian, an indignant Marian. But the silence that followed was neither the silence of embarrassment nor of self-conscious love. It was the silence of despair. For the face I sought was missing, the door was open, the tonneau was empty. My prisoner had escaped.

XXI

AT first I would not believe it. Marian gone? The tonneau empty? Impossible! When had she left the car? What a reckless thing to do! Why, she might have broken her neck! I stepped into the middle of the road and peered anxiously in the direction from which I had just come. No sign of her anywhere.

I remembered now that I had slowed down while trying to gather courage to glance over my shoulder. She must have escaped then. I couldn't have been going more than six miles an hour at the time. Why in thunder hadn't I glanced over my shoulder? It served me jolly well right for being such a coward.

I jumped into the car and threw in the switch. Would she take the spark without

cranking? She ought to; there should be plenty of gas in the cylinders. Just listen to that!

In spite of my anxiety, I could not help but feel a glow of satisfaction. It wasn't every car that would take the spark at the throw of the switch. No, there were mighty few that would, no matter what the conditions. Wallie Stuart's wouldn't. Neither would Larry Sullivan's.

Not that that made any difference, now. I'd willingly trade my car for a penny whistle if I could only find Marian. But that was foolish; I must find her; there were no "if's" about it.

She would walk back to Primrose Court, of course, and I could easily overtake her before she reached there. Perhaps she'd hail the first wagon that passed, and ask for a lift. No wagons were passing just now, thank goodness! The road was clear as far as I could see.

I began to wonder if I'd recognize the tree I had approached at six miles an hour. There was no end of trees bordering the road. This particular one stood rather by itself, if I remembered rightly. Yonder was a solitary

tree. I wasn't approaching it six miles an hour, either; I was making nearer sixty.

Hullo! What was that?

I jammed home both brakes like lightning, but I had been going too fast; I couldn't pull up in ten yards, nor yet in twenty. It took me a good forty before I dared risk turning around.

Once faced about, I approached the tree, stopping short at its base. For, lo, I had found Marian. There she was, sitting on a boulder beside the tree.

So she hadn't run away, after all. Why hadn't she? Maybe she had sprained her ankle? If she had, I'd never forgive myself —never! That was it, of course: she *had* sprained her ankle.

I now hurriedly descended from the car. "You are hurt!" I cried in accents of real distress.

She looked up at me in the most adorable way possible. "No, I am not hurt," she replied coldly.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"I'm so glad—so very glad! And now you'll allow me to explain everything, won't you?"

"I don't think I care to listen to explanations just now, Mr. Snowden."

"Oh, but you must allow me to explain!"

"Really, Mr. Snowden ——"

"You see it was like this: Jimmie Redmond and I were coming in from Ardsley, and Jimmie got a speck of dust in his eye, so we stopped at the drug store, and ——"

"Please don't bother," she interrupted.

"It's no bother," I said. "And while Jimmie was in the drug store having his eye attended to ——"

"I must beg you to excuse me, Mr. Snowden."

"Oh, but I simply have to explain how it happened!"

"It isn't necessary, I assure you."

"Then I'll skip that part, if you wish. Now, about the police station, and my getting arrested, and ——"

"I'd much prefer that you'd skip that part, too."

"Oh, but I've simply got to explain! If a fellow can't explain, how is he ever to set things right?"

"Really, Mr. Snowden!"

"You're offended with me," I said; "I know you are."

"Is that so unreasonable of me?"

"You wouldn't have got out of the car while it was moving, if you hadn't been," I continued.

"I was led to believe that you intended taking me to the Country Club, Mr. Snowden."

"I know," I said. "I acted abominably. But if you'd let me explain —— Do you believe in love at first sight?"

She gave me a quick look, then rose hastily and stood beside me.

"I'm not in the humor to listen to explanations this afternoon," she said.

"But that explains everything," I returned triumphantly. "You see ——"

"I'm ready to return to Primrose Court," she interrupted.

"You see, I loved you from the very first, and ——"

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Snowden."

With that she turned on her heel and started down the road.

"Oh, I say!" I protested. "Aren't you going to let me drive you back?"

"Thank you, but I prefer to walk."

"I prefer to walk, thank you."

Then I'd walk, too. But maybe she'd relent? On the whole, wouldn't it be better to climb into the car and follow along, ready to give her a lift when she got over being angry with me?

Yes, that seemed the best plan. I'd feel like an awful pig, riding while she walked. But why shouldn't I feel like a pig?

XXII

MARIAN in her trim boots marching defiantly toward Primrose Court, Bill Snow following timidly in his eleven-thousand-dollar imported automobile. It was a picture to make the angels weep. Indeed, had it clouded up and rained teardrops from Heaven, just then, I shouldn't have been a bit surprised.

"If Jimmie Redmond could only see us now!" I thought.

I was mighty glad he couldn't see us, though. Maybe if I was very humble and abject, Marian would listen to reason, would give me another chance. There was no doubt about my being humble; I was as meek as Moses. If the meek ever did inherit the earth, I'd come in for most of Long Island, by George! And I'd trade my whole inherit-

ance for one smile from Marian—one fleeting, friendly smile.

I drew a little nearer—still nearer. I was beside her.

"Won't you *please* allow me to drive you to Primrose Court?" I asked.

"Thank you, but I prefer to walk."

"It's a good three miles," I urged.

She walked on in silence.

"Isn't there something I can do or say to make you forgive me, Miss Standish?"

No answer.

"I would do anything in the world," I continued.

Still no answer.

"Anything in the world," I repeated dismally.

"You might leave me," she suggested.

"Anything but that!" I cried.

"It looks perfectly foolish to have you tagging along after me in an automobile."

"I'm past caring for looks," I said.

"I'm not," she replied.

"If you'd only let me explain," I pleaded

Silence.

"It wouldn't take five minutes."

Silence.

"And then you'd understand."

Silence.

More silence.

"Miss Standish!"

She stopped short.

As it was some seconds before I had sense enough to apply my brakes, I now led the procession by several yards. Being in the lead, however, was not without its advantages; I threw in the reverse, backing in a semicircle till I had planted the car squarely across her path. Then I jumped to the ground beside her.

"Miss Standish," I said solemnly, "if you don't speak to me this minute I'll scream."

"Mr. Snowden," she said, "if you address me once more I'll join you."

Then we both laughed.

"This beats screaming all hollow," I managed to say a moment later.

"Yes, doesn't it?"

"And explanations, too."

"Oh, decidedly!" she agreed.

"You might as well ride the rest of the way," I said.

"Supposing I prefer to walk?"

"I don't mind tagging along in the automobile," I said.

"But it looks so silly."

"Then you will ride back in the car, won't you?"

"Of course it is understood that I shall pay you your regular rate ——"

"I haven't any rate," I replied shortly.

"——Of two dollars and a half an hour," she continued.

"You are unnecessarily cruel, Miss Standish."

"I owe you eight dollars as it is, Mr. Snowden: five for car-hire, and three for the chauffeur who drove us in from the restaurant that night. If I had only thought to bring my purse with me —— But I can pay you when we reach Primrose Court. I always pay my debts, Mr. Snowden."

"I shall expect you to sit beside me on the front seat, you know."

"Is that necessary?"

"Oh, quite!"

With that I helped her into the car.

How wonderful it was to have her there beside me! I quite lost my head with happiness. Instinctively, I advanced the spark,

opened the throttle and threw in the clutch. And then. . . .

It was too awful. Instead of moving out into the road, the car leaped backward like a wild thing.

Crash! crash! crash! Crunch! BANG!

I had forgotten to change speeds. I had started her on the reverse.

And that sound of splintering metal—that was my gasoline tank gone to glory against a boulder or something. And the gasoline would drip on to the red-hot exhaust pipe leading from the muffler—and then—and then—while there might not be an explosion ——

"Miss Standish," I said quietly, "I fear we have met with a grave accident. Please get out."

She obeyed instantly.

"Now please cross to the other side of the road."

"And you?"

"Go at once."

"But ——"

"Go!" I thundered.

She went.

XXIII

I NOW tore off my dust-coat and jumped from the car.

Yes, she was afire. And the tank held forty gallons of gasoline!

Gad, what a blaze! And no rug to smother it with—nothing but a flimsy dust-coat!

I tore off my other coat, and with it tried to beat out the flames; but the fire, fed from the hole in the tank, spread in spite of me, ran here and there in little rivers, mounted higher and higher, scorching the back of the tonneau, shriveling the paint. The more desperately I flayed it with my coat, the faster it seemed to burn. My coat was on fire!

I cast it aside and, scooping up handfuls of dust, renewed the attack. That was the stuff! If I could only put out the fire directly

under the hole in the tank, I'd win. Lordy, but it was hot!

Bang!

The gasoline had begun to vaporize.

Bang! Bang!

She was vaporizing to beat the band.

I kicked dust, I burrowed in it like a dog, I filled my cap with it. I'd try to stuff the cap into the hole in the tank. Why hadn't I thought of it before?

BOOM!

A sheet of flame shot heavenward. Explosion followed explosion.

BOOM! BOOM!

I jumped back involuntarily, and bumped into something. There was a hand on my arm. It was Marian!

"Go away!" I yelled.

She did not move. A gust of wind drove the flame almost into our faces.

I picked her up, as if she'd been a child, and hurried down the road.

At a safe distance I set her down, then turned abruptly. The tonneau was now a blazing furnace. There was a hopeless smell of melting rubber. It was as gloomy as a funeral.

At a safe distance, I set her down; then turned abruptly.

The flames leaped higher and higher. They leaped forward like a pack of wolves, licking and spitting. I could bear to look no longer. My dear old car was done for, I was dirty and dusty and forlorn; my cap was gone, my coat was gone, my hands were blistered, and—it was all my fault.

What a rotten place for a gasoline tank, anyway! Would Frenchmen never learn that the proper way to feed gasoline was by gravity, that the proper place for a tank was under the seat?

BOOM!

That was the biggest explosion yet. And to think ——

A voice interrupted my thoughts. "It's too bad, Mr. Snowden."

"It was all my own fault," I said. "I forgot to change speeds, and started her on the reverse."

"It was such a beautiful car, and I'm so sorry."

"It was a bully car, and I loved it."

"Poor Bill Snow!" she murmured.

"To hear you say that is worth all the cars in the world," I said. "Won't you understand, dear? I don't care for any-

thing in the world but you. I loved you the first time I saw you. I ——"

"Please don't," she pleaded.

"All right, I won't. But you do understand, don't you?"

"Yes, I understand—that is, I understand everything except how the car caught fire."

"I bumped into a boulder and smashed the gasoline tank," I explained. "And now I can't drive you back to Primrose Court."

"We can walk."

"But it's a good three miles."

"I can walk three miles very easily. Besides, we may be able to persuade a passing wagon to give us a lift."

"It takes money to persuade passing wagons, and I've only a dollar and seven cents. Come to think of it, I've only a dollar; the seven cents was in a pocket of my dust-coat, and I dropped that by the automobile."

"Poor dust-coat! Still, a dollar should be quite enough."

"But I can't part with my dollar," I said; "it's the one you gave me the first time you went riding with Bill Snow. It wasn't till

I ordered luncheon to-day that I discovered I'd come off without any money, and ——"

"Do you mean to tell me you went without luncheon rather than spend my dollar?"

"Of course I did. Do you think I could spend that dollar? Why, I've kissed it heaps of times! I can't show it to you now because it's sewed into my waistcoat pocket; I sewed it in myself for fear of losing it."

She looked at me thoughtfully. "I believe you do love me," she said.

"I can't begin to tell you how much I love you," I replied, "or how I've worried about that handsome chap who dined with you that night."

"My silly cousin?"

"He called you 'dear'; I heard him."

"He was properly disciplined for that, Mr. Snowden."

"Say Bill," I urged.

"Not now."

"Will you, sometime?"

"Perhaps."

"Soon?"

"Perhaps."

"Why not now?"

"Oh!"

"But you will, sometime?"

"Ye—es."

"And you do care for mè a little?"

"Ye—es, Bill."

I promptly clasped her in my arms and kissed her.

(THE END)